

Hindsight is 20-20

2-10-2013

Luke 9: 28-36

28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. 29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, 31 appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. 32 Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. 33 As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) 34 While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." 36 When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

Have you ever made the statement, if I had only known then what I know now? I think most of us have made that statement at one time or another; I know I have. If I had only known in high school what I know now, I sure would have done things differently. If I had only known then what I know now, I would have done that job interview differently. If I had only known then what I know now, I would have never smoked that first cigarette. Let's see; speeding tickets, or traffic accidents; stock purchases or not purchasing a certain stock; how about last Wednesday night's winning Powerball Lottery number. That one was supposed to be worth around \$175,000,000.00. Each of us can probably come up with several of those "if I had only known then" statements in just a minute or two. After all, hindsight is 20-20. Unlike Peter, James, and John in today's scripture lesson, we can say that about Jesus. We happen to have hindsight when it comes to Jesus' life. We've read the book, we know how it ends. The disciples didn't have that luxury.

Today's scripture lesson is about the transfiguration of Jesus. The lesson can actually be broken down into four different segments; watch, wait, listen, and learn. The first segment, verses 28-31, is about Jesus' Transfiguration. Let's call that the "**watch**" segment. The second segment, verses 32 and 33, is about Peter's suggestion to erect three tents. We'll call that section the "**wait**" section. The third segment, verses 34 and 35, is about God's announcement; let's call that the "**listen**" segment. And, finally we have section four, verse 36, how the three disciples responded to what had just happened. Let's call that "**learn**".

Before we delve into today's scripture, let's back up to a verse right before today's scripture lesson. In verse 27 Jesus says, "**Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.**" Jesus is talking with his disciples when He says this and none of them really understood what He was talking about. If this is the first time you have read the 9th chapter of Luke or the first time you have heard this particular piece of scripture, you may be a little perplexed about the kingdom of God statement yourself. Our scripture today, started with the words, "**About eight days after Jesus said this**"... This gives us a time frame for when He took Peter, James and John to the mountain to pray. Jesus had predicted his own death and told the disciples that some of them would see the kingdom of God before they died. Eight days later, Peter, James, and John are actually see a portion of the kingdom. Starting with verse 29: **As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.** ³⁰ **Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.** Here we have two of the strongest components of the Jewish religion. First is Moses who represents the law. He brought the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai. From those Ten Commandments, the Scribes and Pharisees wrote the 613 laws that governed Jewish life. Moses is the father of the law sent by God. The other component of the Jewish religion is based on the prophesies. Elijah is the best known and probably considered the greatest of all the prophets. And now as Jesus is on the mountain praying, all of a sudden His appearance changes and He is having a conversation with Moses and Elijah. They are talking with Jesus about the mind and will of God.

They speak of Jesus' forthcoming departure in Jerusalem, about his forthcoming death and resurrection. Jesus had spoken with his disciples about this before going up the mountain. And now these three disciples were actually seeing the kingdom of God. Could you imagine being one of the three disciples and watching this take place? That's why I called this segment the "watch" segment.

In verses 32 and 33 we read, **Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."** Peter was ready to stay. Wait, let's see what else might happen while we're on the mountain. Let's put up some tents. Let's stay a while and you can talk some more with Moses and Elijah. Let's wait and see what else they might have to say. Wait, let's not go anywhere yet. Wait, segment two.

Verses 35 and 36, the listen segment: **While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."** I cannot even begin to fathom how those three disciples were feeling. They have just watched Jesus change appearance, become a brilliant light brighter than lightning. One translation says He become almost translucent. They have watched Jesus have a conversation with Moses and Elijah, two of the heroes of the Torah who have died and gone to be with God. Now a cloud was enveloping them and a voice, the voice of God, was speaking, **"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."** To me, this verse begs the question, who was God speaking to; Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, John. I wonder if He was speaking to you or me. **This is my son... Listen to Him.** Let's come back to that in a minute.

The last segment, Learn, verse 36: **When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.** Note the words, at that time. We call this particular event in the life of Jesus the transfiguration. The story is told in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark as well as in today's lesson from Luke. In Matthew and Mark as the four of them, Jesus and the three disciples, are coming down from the mountain, Jesus instructs the three disciples not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the resurrection. In Luke, Jesus does not speak at all. The last verse just says that they didn't tell anyone at that time. I don't have any problem believing that they kept quiet. They probably had a pretty good idea how this would have been received. Can you just see them getting back to the rest of the disciples and saying; "guys, you will never believe what we just saw and heard." They would have been right; I don't think anyone would have believed them. They had a lot to learn before they truly understood what they had seen transpire. The disciples all had a lot to learn, and not just Peter, James, and John. All twelve had a long way to go in their understanding of who Jesus really was and what His life meant to mankind. They had a lot to learn.

Today is called Transfiguration Sunday in Christianity. Transfiguration Sunday is the last Sunday before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. We will have a Taize style Ash Wednesday service to start the Lenten Season. I hope each of you will attend and will bring a friend.

I've said it here in the pulpit several times and will probably say it several more. We have the benefit of hindsight. We have the benefit of knowing how the story ends. We know what happened to Jesus Christ. We know of his crucifixion and of his resurrection. We know that through Him we may each have salvation, life everlasting with God. Yet, just like the disciples, we have trouble with the **listen** part of today's scripture; **This is my Son...; listen to him.** Jesus is beginning His journey to Jerusalem, His journey to the cross. Jesus spends the rest of his life trying to teach the disciples, trying to prepare them for their tasks after He is gone. Yet, we know from reading the scriptures, they didn't listen very well. Listen to just a few of the failings (if you don't mind the use of the word failing to describe the actions of the disciples) listen to a few of their failings. Each of these scripture references are from the Gospel of Luke:

(9:37-43) They will fail to heal a boy with a demon

(9:43-45) They will fail to understand Jesus' warning about his betrayal

(9:46-48) They will argue about which one of them is the greatest

(18:31-34). Once again, they will not understand Jesus prediction of his death and resurrection

(22:54-62) Peter will deny Jesus

(23:49) They will stand at a distance while Jesus was crucified

The disciples were happy to listen to Jesus when he told them what they wanted to hear. They were happy to listen when Jesus said things that rang true, that reinforced what they already believed. But sometimes, Jesus told them things they didn't want to hear, things that didn't ring true, things that seemed backwards, things like He was going to suffer and die. They didn't want to hear that, so they didn't listen. He told them that they too would suffer and die; they didn't want to hear that either, so they didn't listen.

I think sometime we are just a bit too much like the disciples. As long as we are hearing something in our religion we like, something we agree with, we listen. But when we hear something we don't like or agree with, we stop listening. Last week we talked about where we would find Jesus if He were to come to Greenville today. I don't think most of us were too fond of the places we talked about, the Walter B Jones Rehab Center, or the methadone clinic, or the homeless shelter, etc. So I gave you an out...I asked you to go to a friend, an unchurched friend, and be the hands and feet of Jesus. I don't want to see a show of hands, but answer the question in your own heart, how many of you became the hands and feet of Jesus last week. How many of you went to an unchurched friend with the message of Jesus Christ? See, it's easy to do something you like, but when we don't like what is being said or what we're being asked to do, we are just like the disciples, we just don't listen. **This is my son...Listen to Him.** Why do we have such difficulty with that? Today is Transfiguration Sunday. Wouldn't this be a great day for you to let Jesus Christ begin a transfiguration in your heart, in your life. Wouldn't this be a great day for you to begin to "**Listen to Him**".